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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

18 March 1957

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 15-57

SUBJECT: France and Africa*

1. One of the primary topics raised by Premier Mollet during his recent visit in the US was the French concern with Eurafrigue. This theme of creating new relationships between the two continents in order to preserve European influence in Africa is receiving fresh emphasis as the French contemplate their shrunken world power position and the current threats to their remaining overseas possessions. Over the past few years France has lost Indochina, Tunisia, and Morocco, engaged in an increasingly bitter and costly struggle against Arab nationalism in Algeria, and faced minor but growing unrest in several parts of French "Black" Africa.

2. To combat this trend, the French are seeking to bolster their international standing by developing the resources and aiding the political evolution of overseas France. Thus during the past year a new economic organization of Saharan areas has been charted, a relatively liberal political program has been formulated for French Black Africa, French Togoland has been given the status of a limited republic, and France has won a tentative agreement from her prospective partners in the European Common Market for contributions to the development of the French overseas territories. However, France confronts a number of interrelated problems which could preclude realization of the Eurafrica concept; foremost among them are the burgeoning French economic difficulties and the Algerian conflict.

3. The unfavorable character of the North African scene is obvious. The situation in French Black Africa, on the other hand, cannot be gauged with much accuracy at present; the tendency in the absence of comprehensive data is toward either undue alarmist speculation

* The substance of this memorandum has been discussed with OCI.

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DOCUMENT NO. 16
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒
☒ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 2/26/80 REVIEWER: 009256

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or equally unfounded complacency. Apparently much of the current confusion stems from the very consideration of the French political program (embodied in the Loi-cadre*) which is expected to go into effect this spring. The forehanded French action by its nature has elicited expressions of political opinion from large numbers of Africans who previously had little interest in political affairs. Passage of the decrees through the French parliament has been accompanied by full debate, with the result that talk of regional self-government, internal autonomy, and even of independence has been prevalent in many hitherto tranquil areas of Black Africa.

4. Coupled with the stir caused by the Loi-cadre has been the impact of such West African developments as the creation of Ghana and the "self-governing Republic of Togoland." Moreover, in December the other French UN Trust Territory in Africa, the Cameroons, held popular elections for a territorial assembly which has since participated in the formulation of a new statute granting a limited measure of self-government. It is unlikely that the French West and Equatorial territories will long respect the distinction between their status and that of the trust areas. There are also growing indications that events in North Africa are having a substantial effect on the territories south of the Sahara.

5. However, despite the changed political atmosphere in French Black Africa over the past year, there have been few acts of violence against the French, and no African leader of real prominence has demanded independence from France. On the other hand, there are indications that the current leaders are losing influence to more extreme nationalists who will not be placated by moderate French political and economic programs. Meanwhile, many of the present native leaders appear agreed that the Loi-cadre will provide as much of a political advance as their people can handle now, and that French economic aid is a vital element in that progress. Their future attitudes probably will be largely determined by (a) the manner in which the French implement the new decrees, and (b) the ability of France to provide continuing large-scale financial support. The record of French administrators in

*This is the usual term for the Overseas Reform Act of June 1956, an omnibus bill authorizing: (a) certain electoral changes and creation of cabinet-type councils in the overseas territories; (b) new statutes for French UN Trust Territories; and (c) the drafting of numerous decrees, 13 of which now under discussion are designed to speed the evolution toward greater local autonomy.

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implementing the policies of Paris in Indochina and North Africa, as well as the complex nature of the decrees, does not cause us to be sanguine on the first count.

6. On the second count, in attempting to use the resources of their European partners to develop the African territories, the French are admitting their inability to support even present requirements for development funds in Africa. The trite observation that France is overextended has lost none of its force during the partial prosperity of the last two years. Indeed, a basic cause of the present tense economic situation is France's inability to continue to support its current and long-overdue internal expansion because of competing claims on its resources resulting from the Algerian conflict, the Suez issue, and the high investment rate in Africa.

7. Under present political and economic conditions it is equally difficult to see how the French government could either slough off any one of its overseas commitments or support them all without very substantial external financial assistance. Nor is this current situation solely an extraordinary one resulting from the abortive Suez intervention. The French balance of payments and budget deficits were causing alarm prior to the Suez crisis; they have mushroomed in recent months, even though the impact of Suez has not been as severe as the French originally envisaged.

8. In any case, France's onrushing economic difficulties are likely to have a seriously adverse effect on the Eurafrika scheme. The French government has as yet done little to alleviate the problem in terms of internal measures to reduce the budget deficit and the flow of imports. A continued failure to reduce excess internal demand is likely to result in French backsliding on its commitments to the OEEC trade liberalization program. In that event, the projected Common Market Treaty might not come into being in the near future, if at all. Moreover, it is possible that even if the treaty were ratified, the French might not be able to contribute their share to the common development fund for the overseas territories without paring their current expenditures.

9. In addition to its contribution toward France's economic woes, the Algerian conflict operates in other ways inimical to the Eurafrika idea. It has done much to sabotage France's efforts to create new and mutually satisfactory relationships with independent Morocco

- 3 -

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and Tunisia, which persist in giving material and diplomatic aid to the Algerian rebels. French credits to both countries have been held up and probably will not be released until defense arrangements acceptable to France can be negotiated; this issue in turn is likely to depend on progress toward an Algerian settlement. The US has thereby been placed in an awkward position with respect to the Moroccan bases and to its policy of supplementing rather than supplanting French aid, the amounts of which cannot at present be determined. If the Algerian problem continues to bedevil French-African relations over the next several months, the US is likely to be faced with serious problems on both defense and aid questions.

10. Another damaging aspect of the Algerian struggle with regard to the Eurafrika idea is that Algeria is the basis of the Saharan economic scheme. The bulk of the mineral wealth of French Africa consists of oil, iron, copper, and manganese which have been discovered in commercially exploitable quantities in Algeria and Mauritania. The latter area is now the scene of scattered small raids by Moroccans who may be receiving official encouragement from their government, even though it has not as yet formally announced its sweeping territorial claims to Mauritania, Spanish Sahara, and a portion of Algeria.

11. Finally, the French virtual declaration of war against Arab nationalism, provoked by Nasser's aid to Algeria, complicates France's relations with most of its African territories as well as with Morocco and Tunisia. The leaders of the two latter states are not favorably disposed toward Nasser, but they are compelled to join other Arab nations in inveighing against the increasingly close French connection with Israel. The same sentiments appear to prevail in the Moslem areas of French Black Africa.

12. In sum, we believe that recent events with respect to Algeria and the French economy indicate that the pace of African developments adverse to France is likely to be somewhat faster than we would have estimated a year ago. Moreover, it seems likely that France will soon be faced with a choice between stringent deflationary internal measures and an Algerian settlement on terms which might provoke a violent reaction among Frenchmen on both continents. There is an even chance that the French will attempt to avoid this dilemma by seeking US aid of the dimensions recently extended to Great Britain. On the other hand, we do not wish to depreciate the French penchant for postponing decisions until it is too late. In any event, the future of the Eurafrika policy does not appear bright.

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- 4 -

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